

SUBJECT: 2023 Rate Enhancement Accountability Report Request - STAIRS

Dear Providers:

This notice contains information on mandatory Rate Enhancement Accountability Reporting for the following programs:

- Deaf Blind Multiple Disabilities Waiver (DBMD)
- Home and Community-based Services / Texas Home Living (HCS/TxHmL)
- Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability or Related Conditions (ICF/IID)
- Nursing Facility (NF)
- Residential Care (RC)

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is implementing a cost report reform initiative for the providers listed above for the 2023 reporting period. Amendments to §355.102(d) requires that HHSC establish reporting schedules per program. HHSC has determined providers for the programs listed above will be required to submit “odd-year” cost report only beginning with the providers’ 2018 fiscal year cost reports.

In accordance with Information Letter 2023-42, the HHSC announces the adoption of an amendment to Title 1 of the Texas Administrative Code §355.112(h)(2)(B) concerning the Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement reports.

The adopted amendment modifies several aspects of the Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement Program, including the requirements for participating providers to submit an attendant compensation report for determining spending requirements in the Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement Program. For rate years in which participating providers are not required to submit a cost report, HHSC will require a subset of participating providers to submit an accountability report to serve as an attendant compensation report.

Please refer to the information letter located on the HHSC website (see address below):

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/il2023-42.pdf>

HHSC may collect 2023 accountability reports from the providers listed above for their 2023 fiscal years for the time period in which they participated in the attendant compensation rate enhancement. Providers for the program types listed above who did not participate in rate enhancement during their 2023 fiscal year are not required to submit an accountability report.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR NURSING FACILITY PROVIDERS

HHSC will require nursing facility providers who do not participate in the direct care staff enhancement program to submit a special accountability report for expenses incurred between September 1, 2023, and the start of their 2024 cost reporting period to comply with direct care spending requirements. For more information regarding direct care spending requirements,

please see IL 2023-43 (link below) State Fiscal Year 2024 Nursing Facility Direct Care Spending Requirements

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/il2023-43.pdf>

EXCUSAL OF REPORTS WITH NO UNITS OF SERVICE

HHSC will be excusing reports that are verified as having performed no billable services during the provider's reporting period. A banner message will be displayed at the top of the STAIRS screen if a report has been excused. If the provider has questions, please contact the HHSC PFD LTSS team at PFD-LTSS@hhs.texas.gov.

DUE DATE

The accountability report(s) must be fully verified, all required documentation uploaded, and the report submitted through the State of Texas Automated Cost Reporting System (STAIRS) online application. Information on STAIRS is provided below.

The 2023 accountability report(s) for the above services must be submitted no later than **April 30, 2024**.

REPORT SUBMISSION AND PREPARER REQUIREMENTS

Providers for the above services and enrolled the Staffing and Compensation Report
It is the responsibility of the contracted provider to submit an accurate report, completed in accordance with all applicable instructions and rules.

In accordance with Title 1 of the Texas Administrative Code §355.102(d), it is the responsibility of each provider to ensure that the preparer who signs the Cost Report Methodology Certification completes the required HHSC-sponsored cost report training.

Preparers must complete a training webinar for each program for which an accountability report is submitted. In order to be qualified to complete the 2023 accountability, the preparer must have completed the mandatory cost report training for the years of 2022 (held in 2023) or 2023 (held in 2024).

Preparers who have NOT completed the mandatory training will NOT be added to the list of eligible preparers in STAIRS and therefore cannot be selected and assigned as the Preparer. NO EXEMPTIONS from the mandatory training requirements will be granted.

Information Letter No. 2023-44, was distributed via HHSC electronic communication on December 8, 2023, to notify providers of the upcoming schedule of available training sessions. This letter has also been posted on the Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC) Provider Finance Department (PFD) Website in the Training information section of each program. Details on requirements for mandatory cost report training for preparers and how to register for a training webinar are available on the **Provider Finance Department Website** (see below).

THE STATE OF TEXAS AUTOMATED INFORMATION REPORTING SYSTEM (STAIRS)

Providers must submit their 2023 accountability report through STAIRS. STAIRS is web-based and hosted by state contractor, Fairbanks, LLC.

Providers and preparers who have previously submitted a cost report via STAIRS will use the same logon information to access the 2023 accountability report as well as any other 2023 cost report they must submit.

New providers without prior STAIRS access, will be sent an email containing STAIRS login information including their username and password. The email will be sent to the Primary Entity Contact designated by HHSC PFD. A new provider who has not received an e-mail with their login information by February 7, 2024, should contact CostInformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov.

The Primary Entity Contact has the responsibility to assign other Contacts for their entity in STAIRS. At a minimum, a "Preparer" who is responsible for completing the entity's accountability report and/or cost report must be assigned. Assigning a "Primary Financial Contact" is also an option. If a Primary Financial Contact is assigned, either the Primary Entity Contact or the Primary Financial Contact has the ability to assign additional Contacts, including the assignment of the Preparer.

It is strongly encouraged that the Preparer be assigned as soon as possible to give the preparer access to the report in STAIRS. They must have adequate time to prepare the report so that the entity may then complete the final Step in STAIRS to submit their report by the due date.

A reference material document titled ***Helpful Information for Contacts and Preparers*** is available to provide guidance in adding other Contacts or Preparers. Reference Materials are located at the bottom of the main screen after logging onto STAIRS.

When logging into STAIRS for the very first time a Contact will be asked to establish a security profile for their account that will include setting up three (3) question and answer pairs that will be used to validate identity in the event the Contact forgets or need to reset their password.

PROVIDER FINANCE DEPARTMENT WEBSITE

The HHSC PFD website contains program-specific cost and accountability report instructions, cost report training information and materials, payment rates, PFD staff contact information and web links for cost report training registration and support for automated reporting. Additional information and features are added periodically. We encourage you to visit the PFD website at:

<https://pfd.hhs.texas.gov/long-term-services-supports>

RESOURCES

Questions regarding contracts and cost report groupings that have been assigned to your entity should be directed to HHSC PFD at CostInformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov

Questions regarding Preparers, or the list of Preparers, should be directed to HHSC PFD CostInformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov

Questions regarding adding Contacts or problems with UserName and/or Password should be directed to the Fairbanks, LLC, Help Desk at 877-354-3831 or info@fairbanksllc.com

Questions regarding the proper completion of your accountability report in STAIRS should be directed to the appropriate HHSC contact for your program. A list of program contacts can be found at:

<https://pfd.hhs.texas.gov/long-term-services-supports/contact-list>

Sincerely,

Pamela Minton
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